00726

1963/04/02

2

INCOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

Jacs

36-31
Action

CONFIDENTIAL

Control: 1431
Rec'd: APRIL 2, 1963
11:15 AM

FE
Info

FROM: VIENTIANE

TO: Secretary of State

SS
SR
G
SP
L
H
SAL
EUR
NEA
IO
AID
P
USIA
NSC
INR
CIA
NSA
OSD
ARMY
NAVY
AIR
NIC
RMR

NO: 1362, APRIL 2, 9 PM

OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE

ACTION DEPARTMENT 1362, INFORMATION PRIORITY BANGKOK 1127, CINCPAC 751, LONDON 625, NEW DELHI 267, PHNOM PENH, SAIGON UNNUMBERED, PARIS 646, MOSCOW 158.

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

DEPT POUCH OTTAWA

EMBTEL 1355.

FOLLOWING IS ROUNDUP AS OF 1800 APRIL 2 INFORMATION AND REACTIONS TO ASSASSINATION FONMIN QUINIM:

1. SCENARIO. DEATH FROM AUTOMATIC WEAPON FIRE FOLLOWING HIS RETURN HOME FROM PALACE RECEPTION ALMOST CERTAINLY CAUSED BY ONE OF QUINIM'S NEUTRALIST HOUSE GUARDS, APPARENTLY WITH FOREKNOWLEDGE OTHER MEMBERS OF GUARD DETAIL. STORIES RE MOTIVE RANGE FROM RUMORED CONFESSION OF KILLER (WHO IN HANDS JOINT DNC-NEUTRALIST GUARD AT PRESIDENCE) HE ACTED AT KONG LE'S ORDER, TO CLAIM PRISONER ADMITTED RECEIVING 150,000 KIP FOR DEED, TO STORY HE CLAIMS HE ACTED STRICTLY ON OWN INITIATIVE FROM PATRIOTIC MOTIVES AND REVENGE FOR KETSANA MURDER. SOVIETS ARE REPORTED TO HAVE RECEIVED, FROM PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, VERSION THAT GUARD WAS ONE WHO HAD BEEN WITH QUINIM AT PDJ, WHO CLAIMS HE MURDERED HIM IN "HEROIC ACT" TO SAVE HIS COUNTRY. SOUPHANOUVONG TOLD PRESS ACT "INSTIGATED BY FOREIGNERS" WHOM HE DECLINED IDENTIFY. IN LATE AFTERNOON NEUTRALIST SPOKESMAN TOLD PRESS KILLER WAS YOUNG CORPORAL RECENTLY ARRIVED

REPRODUCTION FROM THIS COPY IS PROHIBITED UNLESS "UNCLASSIFIED"

FROM PDJ WHO PROFESSED TO HAVE ACTED OUT OF LOVE OF COUNTRY. PRESS HAS IDENTIFIED SOLDIER AS ONE CHEI KONG. SEE ENCL 1 OF EMB A-347, MARCH 22, AS WELL AS FOV 6583 AND 6641 FOR CLOSEST WE HAVE TO EVIDENCE KILLING MAY HAVE BEEN PLANNED HIGHER UP IN NEUTRALIST HIERACHY.

2. BACKDROP. WORD OF A "SHOOTING" REACTED LAO, AND GRADUALLY FOREIGNERS, AT PALACE RECEPTION WITHIN MINUTES, BUT DURING FOLLOWING HOUR NO RPT NO ONE KNEW OR WAS WILLING ACKNOWLEDGE IDENTITY OF VICTIM, DESPITE DILIGENT INQUIRES BY EMB PERSONNEL. SOUVANNA APPARENTLY TIPPED OFF BY GEN SOUKAN, THEN TOOK GEN PHOUMI FROM DANCE FLOOR AND TWO LEFT IMMEDIATELY WITHOUT SPEAKING TO ANYONE. SOUVANNA RETURNED WITHIN TWENTY MINUTES, RESUMED SERVING CHAMPAGNE TO GUESTS, AND CONCENTRATED ON SOCIAL CHIT-CHAT.

3. FOLLOW-UP. VIENTIANE MAINTAINS ARTIFICIAL CALM. KING DEPARTED FOR LUANG PRABANG, WE UNDERSTAND ESCORTED BY PHOUMI, ON SCHEDULE APRIL 2 MORNING. ARMORED CAR OBSERVED PATROLLING IN TOWN, OTHERWISE NO UNUSUAL PRECAUTIONS OR ACTIVITY IN TOWN, AT AIRPORT, OR NEAR HOMES KEY FIGURES. CABINET MET, DECREED OFFICIAL MOURNING, ISSUED COMMUNIQUE ANNOUNCING DEATH AT "UNKNOWN" HAND, APPARENTLY UNABLE IMMEDIATELY AGREE ON REPLACEMENT AS FONMIN. FAR RADIO STATION REPORTED "MURDERER" RESPONSIBLE FOR "COLD-BLOODED KILLING" UNDER ARREST, SAID DNC HAD RUSHED TO SCENE BUT UNABLE ASSIST BECAUSE HOUSE GUARDED BY NEUTRALIST AND PL SOLDIERS. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF VONGVICHIT'S MINISTRY OF INFO BLAND AND FACT NATIONAL RADIO ATTRIBUTED CRIME TO UNKNOWN EVIL DOER.

4. REACTIONS. FRENCH REACTION SWIFT AND MOST OUTSPOKEN YET HEARD. CHARGE, VERY UPSET, TOOK POSITION THAT WHAT HAD PASSED FOR STABILITY IN LAOS NOW RPT NOW GONE FOREVER, THAT LIKELY RESULT WOULD BE ESCALATING WAVE OF TIT-FOR-TAT ASSASSINATIONS. FRENCH MILITARY SUDDENLY MINIMIZING SIGNIFICANCE KONG LE FORCES AND CAPABILITIES (ARMA CX-55) IN EVENT OF PL BLOW AT PDJ (COMMENT: LINE SUGGESTS WARNING TO US NOT RPT NOT TO ENCOURAGE ANY BOLD ACTIONS BY KONG LE).

THIS MORNING AMB KEPT PREVIOUSLY ARRANGED APPOINTMENT WITH NEUTRALIST MININTERIOR PTENG PHONGSAVAN WHO APPEARED CALM AND IN COURSE CONVERSATION DID NOT RPT NOT FEEL OBLIGED TO MAKE EXPECTED EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF AND REGRET AND MADE NO RPT NO BONES ABOUT QUINIM COOPERATION WITH PL AND COMMUNISTS. NEVERTHELESS HE OBVIOUSLY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT POSSIBLE RETALIATORY ACTION (ESPECIALLY AT PDJ) AND ABOUT POSSIBLE FURTHER PRESSURING OF NEUTRALISTS.

5. IMPLICATIONS. WITH LINES OF LOYALTY TIGHTENING, LEFT AND RIGHT MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY AGREEING ON ANYONE EXCEPT SOUVANNA AS NEW FONMIN.

AS COMMUNISTS MUST KNOW KILLER CAME FROM NEUTRALIST RANKS, WHATEVER THEY SAY PUBLICLY, ONE RESULT LIKELY TO BE INCREASED TENSION PDJ, POSSIBLY ACCOMPANIED BY FURTHER RETALIATORY KILLINGS.

WE ANTICIPATE COMMUNIST EFFORT PIN BLAME ON US, AT LEAST INDIRECTLY.

LONG-RANGE CONSEQUENCES CANNOT NOW RPT NOW BE FORESEEN.

SCP-3.

UNGER

JTC

NOTE: Pouched by DCT.